The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections is responsible for the regulatory and compliance functions related to building and land use activities in Seattle. We are responsible for development and administration of 17 policies and codes for public safety, environmental protection, land use, construction, and housing. We have an annual budget of $89 million and 381 employees. You can find us on the 19th through 22nd floors of the Seattle Municipal Tower.

SDCI at a Glance

Director: Nathan Torgelson
Budget: $88.62 Million
Staff: 381
SDCI is proud to carry out Mayor Jenny Durkan’s progressive vision for a more affordable, inclusive, and vibrant Seattle. In response to our affordable housing crisis, in late 2018 we went live with our Renting in Seattle website and one-stop phone number (206) 684-5700. We held numerous outreach sessions to help tenants and landlords navigate tenants’ rights legislation and the City’s rental registration and inspection program, and we have expanded our annual home fairs to locations in both south and north Seattle to bring City resources and employees closer to you. With the passage of the mandatory housing affordability (MHA) program, we are working with applicants to bring affordable units and housing payments online quickly. We are also hard at work implementing a more robust vacant building monitoring program.

2018 again saw high levels of permitting, building and rental unit inspections, code compliance cases, and inquiries from the public. While the roll-out of the Accela permit tracking system at the end of April did not go as well as planned, we have been hard at work with Seattle IT to improve the system. SDCI has invested $3.1 million for additional improvements.

We had another record year for total permits processed for intake and issued in 2018, with 55,055 total permits processed for intake and 51,472 permits issued. Construction-related permits and Master Use Permits were not quite at record levels, but remain robust. We had a strong year of building development project valuation for both intake and issuance, with $4.5 billion of project intake for construction permits, and $3.9 billion in issuance valuation. From huge projects like the Convention Center addition and the Seattle Center Arena to home remodels, we continue to cover a whole range of permitting and inspection projects. Over 7,800 net new housing units were permitted in 2018. Last year our department was honored to receive the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties “Moving the Market” award for our priority green expedited program.

The Code Compliance division took in 9,821 complaints and requests for service in 2018. We saw major increases in housing code complaints and questions for our tenant and landlord assistance group. Vacant building complaints continued to increase, as did complaints about tree cutting and a wide range of land use and construction-related concerns. Overall, contacts to the Code Compliance group rose 30% in 2018.

We look forward to serving you in 2019 as we implement Mayor Jenny Durkan’s progressive vision for a more affordable, inclusive, and vibrant Seattle.
For our residents, businesses, and visitors, each and every day the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections helps keep our city going.

Today, Seattle is one of the fastest growing cities in our country. We’re literally rebuilding our city, which creates an enormous opportunity to build a city for the next generation. In this era of growth, SDCI’s employees are on the front lines of ensuring that the City of Seattle delivers essential services to our residents and businesses.

At the same time, our biggest challenges have come as our growth has outstripped our infrastructure. As a result, construction faces many challenges and Seattle faces the twin challenges of affordability and homelessness. Too many cannot afford to make Seattle their home, and far too many of our neighbors are being pushed out of the city that they know and love.

SDCI has been a critical partner in tackling this challenge, to make sure Seattle remains livable and open to all. SDCI’s work in partnership with the Office of Planning and Community Development, the Office of Housing, and the Department of Neighborhoods has been critical to implementing the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda and making sure that Seattle can be a home for everyone.

I know SDCI can do more than “just meet” these challenges, its employees will seize the opportunities that continue to make Seattle the great city we love. After all, we have always been the city that invents the future, and we always will be.

Through their hard work and commitment to our city, SDCI is helping build that better future.
Permitting activity remained very strong in 2018 with over 7,200 building permit applications valued at $4.5 billion, and over 6,600 issued building permits valued at about $3.9 billion. 2016-2018 have been three of the largest recorded volume and value totals in the last 20 years, even when adjusted for inflation. The $3.9 billion value of issued permits is an indication that construction continues to be strong. The combination of back-to-back years of extremely high volume and high value (i.e., project complexity) makes it an ongoing challenge to meet our review and inspection targets. However, the additional staff we hired over the past few years are trained and helping get the work accomplished as efficiently and effectively as we can. We are currently making progress on drilling down on the backlogs created by these successive years of high demands. In 2018, we received 954 Master Use Permit applications, a 5% increase from the number received in 2017. The net number of units permitted stayed strong at 7,821 in 2018. The volume of electrical permits remained high, with the number of applications in 2018 at about 24,000. Permitting remained strong again for boilers, conveyance devices, mechanical equipment and systems, and side sewers. All of the permitting activity continued to keep our construction inspection groups very busy. We continued to conduct 98% of building and electrical inspections within 24 hours of receiving the inspection request.
Issued Permits

Total Permits Issued
51,472

Net Number of Units Issued
7,821

Value of Building Permits Issued
$3.9 Billion

Value of Building Applications
$4.5 Billion

Issued Permits:
- Land Use: 679
- Building: 6,682
- Electrical: 23,971
- Boiler: 747
- Conveyance: 1,745
- Mechanical: 7,647
- Sign: 762
- Side Sewer: 4,429
- Refrigeration: 4,810

Annual Report 2018
In 2014, the City convened the Housing Affordability and Livability Advisory Committee to develop an agenda to address the affordable housing crisis in Seattle. One of the recommendations included ensuring that new development also brings more affordable housing to Seattle. To achieve this goal, in certain areas noted below, developers are required to make mandatory housing affordability (MHA) contributions when developing commercial, live-work, and residential uses. There are two ways for them to contribute: they can include affordable housing units in their new buildings (performance option); or they can pay into a fund that will support the development of affordable housing (payment option).

In 2017, the MHA requirements were implemented in the University District, Downtown, South Lake Union, International District, and Uptown (Lower Queen Anne), and some parts of the Central District. In April 2019, the requirements became effective citywide. The MHA requirements are also implemented through contract rezones approved by the City Council.
# Mandatory Housing Affordability Contributions

## MHA Contributions January 1, 2018 Through December 31, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Building Permit Number</th>
<th>Date issued</th>
<th>Final Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1600 Dexter Ave N</td>
<td>6590417-CN</td>
<td>4/17/2018</td>
<td>$1,317,019.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5921 42nd Ave SW</td>
<td>6597550-CN</td>
<td>6/11/2018</td>
<td>$193,256.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4700 Brooklyn Ave NE</td>
<td>6604106-PH</td>
<td>10/19/2018</td>
<td>$3,760,658.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225 Roy St</td>
<td>6580293-CN</td>
<td>11/6/2018</td>
<td>$7,216,540.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>315 W Roy St</td>
<td>6630570-CN</td>
<td>11/6/2018</td>
<td>$67,691.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>712 M L King Jr Way</td>
<td>6623830-CN</td>
<td>11/6/2018</td>
<td>$137,789.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6623832-CN</td>
<td>11/6/2018</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>722 M L King Jr Way</td>
<td>6623834-CN</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>726 M L King Jr Way</td>
<td>6623837-CN</td>
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<td>$137,789.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>1212 Western Ave</td>
<td>6611404-CN</td>
<td>12/20/2018</td>
<td>$17,928.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Totals                |                        |             |                    |
|                       | Payment (in dollars)    | Performance (in units) |
|                       | $13,262,041.08         | 0           |

## Received Contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payment</th>
<th>Performance (in units)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$13,262,041.08</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Code Compliance team helps resolve complaints on a variety of community safety and quality-of-life issues. These include conditions in rental housing, construction without permits, unauthorized uses, junk storage, and vacant buildings. The volume of complaints and cases continues to increase, reflecting increases in development, population, and the accompanying pressures on properties and neighborhoods. Total complaints were up 30% over 2017 and have more than doubled since 2012. Vacant building complaints continued to rise in 2018 and are up 85% from 2012. The Code Compliance team also continues work on tenant protection regulations and landlord-tenant education and outreach. We developed a new website in 2018, Renting in Seattle, to serve as a one-stop information center for landlords and tenants. Over 30,000 properties, with nearly 160,000 units, are now registered in the Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO) program and more than 10,000 RRIO inspections have been completed since the program began.
**Total Complaints**

9,821

**Complaint Types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaint Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1,568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoreline</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeds</td>
<td>1,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone</td>
<td>2,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landlord/Tenant</td>
<td>1,765</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Relocation Assistance**

- **Tenant Relocation License Applications**: 185
- **Low-Income Households Receiving Relocation Assistance**: 165
- **Households Receiving Emergency Relocation Assistance Based on Housing Code Violations**: 18
The Administration Division is responsible for human resource support, budget, finance, and accounting services for all SDCI. In addition to these areas, we lead many department initiatives, including employee engagement and appreciation programs and events, charitable giving, and SDCI’s strategic initiatives.

In 2018, we updated our Fee Subtitle for implementation in 2019 that keeps our fees in line with cost of living adjustments. The Fee Subtitle includes further changes to building development fees and the land use hourly rate that completes a multi-year effort to align our fees with our cost of business. The land use hourly rate, which had not been adjusted for inflation from 2000-2016, is now fully caught up with inflation. Electrical fees were not changed from the 2018 rates, as analysis showed they are currently at a sufficient level to fully support the cost of business.

Finance and Accounting will continue to develop the budget, monitor revenues, ensure that fees are received, charged, and used for appropriate expenses, and to make certain that our fees are scaled appropriately.

We continued to hire and promote staff at a quick pace due to continued high demand for permitting services in the city and to the loss of experienced staff to retirement. Human Resources staff conducted several training sessions in non-biased hiring practices, ran 63 recruitments, on-boarded 44 new employees, and promoted 53 current employees in 2018. In addition, the HR unit: designed and created a new Employee Handbook for SDCI staff; welcomed two Seattle Youth Employment Program interns during the summer months and oversaw an ambitious and rewarding program for them; participated on the City-wide Interdepartmental Team for Anti-Harassment; developed the SDCI Telecommuting Policy; and provided training on Workplace Guidelines for transitioning employees.
Department Highlights

New Permit Tracking System

In early May of 2018, we went live with a new permit tracking and workflow management system, Accela. Unfortunately, the release did not go as smoothly as we anticipated, as we initially experienced significant challenges with system stability and user account transfers from our prior online systems.

We are grateful to all our customers for their patience and understanding as we made this significant transition from our prior system, which was at the end of its useful life.

Fortunately, as a result of this substantial effort we were able to complete data conversion and integrate many of our prior customized web applications and other supporting programs into one platform. The platform simplifies future data entry, makes data more readily available for future reporting, and significantly simplifies our ongoing operations, maintenance, and future enhancements efforts.

Throughout 2018, we worked hard to continuously improve the new system, with issue resolutions and enhancements prioritized based upon ongoing customer and staff feedback.

By the end of 2018, the hard work resulted in many substantial improvements. We have many more improvements queuing up in the coming months/years as we focus on integrating permitting systems across the City on this new platform. As the ongoing improvement work continues, we are refining automated workflows that increase process efficiencies. We are focused on innovative enhancements that will increase transparency and ultimately help keep permit applications on track to free up supervisors and staff for more substantive tasks. This will increase the effectiveness of reviews and reduce overall throughput times for permit applications.

“We are grateful to all our customers for their patience and understanding as we made this significant transition from our prior system, which was at the end of its useful life.”
Department Highlights

Design Review Updates
The new Design Review legislation went into effect last July and implementation of the new thresholds and requirements has gone smoothly. Overall, we have seen more projects fall under the Administrative Design Review track, relieving pressure on the Design Review Boards’ calendars. There is now an additional eighth board, the Central Area Design Review Board. Our partnership with the Department of Neighborhoods, as they manage the new community outreach requirement for all projects subject to Design Review, has worked well to provide tremendous resources to applicants as they navigate this new requirement. To date, 137 projects have completed the community outreach, 69 of which are located in mapped Equity Areas where the outreach was adjusted to respond to specific demographics of that community. We have also started audio recordings of all board meetings, which are stored to the project file and available to the public. We continue to work closely with the Office of Housing on the design review of affordable housing projects that are now subject to the Administrative Design Review process. We have strengthened our coordination with the Office of Planning and Community Development as they develop and adopt design guidelines that are used by the board and staff as they review projects. Finally, we have managed and adapted the specifics of the Design Review projects to the implementation of the Accela permit tracking system.

SDCI Job Shadowing
In 2018, SDCI staff participated in 31 job shadowing events, with about 65% of requests initiated by people of color. Feedback from participants indicates that the program is effective at creating relationships and making connections between workgroups.

Trees
We saw continued public interest in illegal tree removal and tree topping. We received 152 complaints and issued 30 Notices of Violation. The Code Compliance Division finalized a Director’s Rule that clarifies how penalties for illegally damaging or removing trees are calculated. Over the course of 2018, the division collected nearly $108,000 in tree-cutting penalties.

SDCI Strategic Plan Champions
Our Strategic Plan Champions team had a busy year fundraising for charity through a variety of events culminating in our annual Winterfest breakfast and raffle in December 2018. Our staff contributed about $4,500 in donations to Mary’s Place and Childhaven. The team also focused on culture-focused strategic plan initiatives aimed at embedding our purpose and values in our work. The team inaugurated a new peer-to-peer recognition program, the Values Embodied Award, given quarterly to staff members who exemplify the values of respect, integrity, service, equity, and quality in their performance.